INTERAGENCY ADVISORY GROUP

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Minutes of the Committee on
STAFFING

November 29, 1979

The meeting was conducted by Mr. William Irvin, Acting Chairman of the IAG Staffing Committee. Present were 105 representatives from 50 agencies and departments.

Announcements

Mr. Irvin, who is serving as Acting Assistant Director for Staffing, introduced Mr. Richard B. Post as the Acting Deputy Associate Director for Staffing. Mr. Post, who is detailed from his position of Assistant Director for Staffing, is filling in for Mr. John Fossum, who is on detail to the Department of Agriculture.

The formal agenda announced to IAG Staffing Committee members for this meeting included:

Implementation of the Model Staffing Plan

Mr. Richard B. Post, Acting Deputy Associate Director for Staffing, discussed the implemention of the Model Staffing Plan.

FPM Bulletin 331-2, "Implementation of the Model Staffing Plan", was distributed, and Mr. Post reviewed its contents for the Committee. Phased implementation of Component A, which provides for agency examining on a case basis, is scheduled to begin on January 2, 1980. Under Component A, complete examining authority for certain occupations will be centered in agencies. Agencies will have the responsibility for publicizing each vacancy, developing rating criteria, evaluating and rating applicants, issuing lists of best qualified candidates, and selecting candidates in accordance with applicable regulations, and disposing of unused applications.

Initial focus will be on positions currently filled through the Mid-level and Senior Level examinations. OPM's registers for these positions in the field will be abolished by June 30, 1980, and OPM will examine on a case basis for agencies not accepting delegation. A separate plan is being developed by the Washington Area Office for GS-9 through 13 positions in the D.C. area and agencies will be kept informed.

In response to a question on who will be responsible for validation of selection and testing procedures (i.e., OPM or agencies), Mr. Post replied that agencies will be responsible for examinations that they develop. OPM will assist agencies in meeting the part 300 "job relatedness" test, in order to prevent adverse impact.

Mr. Post assured members that OPM is not getting out of the examining business. It is OPM's goal, through new procedures, to make examining faster, with better results.

Collection of Racial and Ethnic Data

John Kraft, Personnel Research and Development Center, briefly discussed the status of race/ethnic data collection on applicants for Federal employment. He said that OPM has received written comments from several agencies on this topic and we have tried to accommodate these comments as much as possible. Mr. Kraft said that the FPM letter authorizing agencies to collect this data should be signed by mid-December.

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This letter will authorize agencies to collect race/ethnic data on applicants from competitive examinations where the applicants come primarily from outside the agency but will not be authorizing agencies to collect data on their own employees. OPM will be consulting with national unions on how best to collect this data on Federal employees before instructions are given for this purpose. He did say that agencies may use their own internal records and CPDF records to assess adverse impact and prepare the statistical reports for the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program. However, agencies may not use these records for setting up skills banks and referral files by race/ethnic background at this time.

Part-Time and On-Call Employment

Availability of candidates for part-time jobs appears to be a significant problem which will probably increase as agencies carry out the part-time employment programs set out by PL 95-437, the Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act of 1978. Ed McHugh, Office of Policy Analysis and Development, stated that OPM is proposing a 2-year demonstration project in selected agencies, designed to determine whether streamlined hiring arrangements will be able to facilitate agency hiring of part-timers and also improve part-time employee retention rates. In this demonstration, appointment procedures would follow Standard Plan 2 as shown in Appendix E of FPM chapter 332. Use of this authority would be limited only in that the position filled must be part-time (NTE 32 hours per week). Employees hired under this special demonstration would not be permitted to use their acquired status to move to a full-time position via reinstatement, reassignment, transfer, or participation in the merit promotion program for 1 year following their appointment.

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When this proposal is finally aproved, a letter will be sent to IAG Staffing Committee Members inviting participation.

Mr. McHugh also informed members of the experimental "on-call employment" program, which establishes a cadre of permanent employees to supplement an agency's continuing full-time work force during periods of heavy workload. Hired under competitive, career-conditional appointments with a provision permitting them to be placed in nonpay status and recalled to duty as workload dictates, these employees work a minimum of 6 months during each 12-month period and are eligible for full fringe benefits. As vacancies occur, these employees may be noncompetitively converted to full-time.

In a recent experiment at Commerce and Defense, over 2,000 on-call employees were hired in a variety of white and blue collar occupations. Applicant acceptance rates for on-call employment compared favorably with those for full-time work. Following layoffs ranging from 5 weeks to 5 months, over 80 percent returned when recalled to duty. Officials who participated in the experiment were generally supportive of its continuation and expansion.

OPM plans to publish an FPM bulletin shortly on guidelines for using the on-call approach Government-wide.

Time-in-Grade Requirements

Mr. Raleigh Neville from the Office of Policy Analysis and Development briefed the group on a staff paper which takes a new approach to setting time-in-grade requirements for promotion. It would replace the current fixed 1-year waiting period (which has not been effective in holding down promotions and may well be counter-productive) with agency programs developed under OPM guidelines and aimed at effectively managing promotions in a manner consistent with good position manage-ment. Comments were invited from Staffing Committee members.

Revision of the SF 171

Mr. Lee Willis, Systems Development and Maintenance Branch, brought the Com-mittee up-to-date on recent changes in the SF 171 that resulted from the CSRA of 1978. He indicated that a more thorough, ongoing revision of the SF 171 is needed to improve the utility of the form for Managers in Government. He briefly covered issues raised by OMB which need review, such as the form's usefulness, the necessity of asking for certain information, and whether the form meets all current needs.

Mr. Willis added that if OPM is to develop an effective form, it will need agency input on these and other issues. To accomplish this, Mr. Willis encouraged members to volunteer to serve on a small work group made up of IAG Staffing Committee members and representatives from OPM. Interested members may contact Mr. Willis or Larry Lorenz on 254-3074.

College Relations and Recruitment Programs

Mr. Allan Howerton, Chief of the Recruitment Management Section, introduced Dr. James Peal, who recently entered on duty as Manager, Nationwide College Relations Activities. Mr. Howerton noted that the staffing aspects of civil service reform, especially those pertaining to delegation of examining authorities to agencies at GS-9 and above and agency-administered alternatives to PACE, provide major oppor-tunities for rethinking the Government's college recruiting approach and designing programs more like those in the private sector. In recent discussions with college placement officials at several seminars on the impact of civil service reform on college relations and at a meeting of the Board of Regional Governors of the College Placement Council, Inc., he observed high levels of interest and support for modernization of Government's on-campus recruitment activities through programs carried out by agencies. Mr. Howerton suggested that there are several possible models through which on-campus recruitment can be harmonized with open competi-tive concepts and merit system statutory requirements. He suggested that the Staffing Committee reconstitute its college relations subcommittee under Dr. Peal's leadership to explore these ideas.

Development of CPDF-Based Staffing Needs Forecasting System

Bill Robinson, Recruitment Management Section, informed members that OPM has developed a replacement for the New Hire Estimates Survey for purpose of forecasting agency competitive staffing needs (Ref. FPM Bulletin 332-61). The new system provides aggregates, from the Central Personnel Data File, of information on competitive accessions (new hires) and onboard strength by locale. This "baseline" information from prior periods is designed for use in OPM field offices as the basic projection of agencies' needs in the same period in the upcoming year, unless significant changes are identified and pointed out by the serviced agencies.

The data is structured by series, agency/subelement and grade. At present, nationwide data by agency is available, both in hardcopy and microfiche, to 14 selected agencies. OPM will be issuing agency nationwide information via an FPM bulletin, to advise other agencies of the availability of this information in microfiche only.